(b) the steps the consortium is taking or propose to take to change the draft text acceptable to all;

(c) whether the Ambassadors from G-20 countries met after the reference of the above draft by WTO to discuss the future course of action; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (d) In the negotiations leading up to the Framework for Establishing Modalities in Agriculture, adopted by the General Council of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on 1st August 2004, the G-20 alliance met regularly at Ministerial, Capital-based Officials, Ambassador and at technical levels, as necessary, in order to formulate their strategy and approach to achieve their objectives of early elimination of export subsidies, substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support and substantial improvements in market access for products of their export interest while safeguarding food security and livelihood concerns and rural development needs of developing countries.

The G-20 alliance also made concerted efforts with other WTO Members to ensure that the Framework Agreement, which is a negotiated document among all WTO Members, duly addresses the concerns and interests of the G-20. The G-20 is continuing to actively engage in the on-going negotiations towards establishing detailed modalities and the further commitments of WTO Members in agriculture. The negotiations have been extended up to the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Hong Kong, China, in December 2005.

Free Trade Agreement with Thailand

315. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed Free Trade Agreement with Thailand;

(b) if so, salient features thereof;

(c) whether the Indian industries have expressed apprehension about the entire process of this agreement;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, India and Thailand have signed only a Framework Agreement for establishing a Free Trade Area (FTA) on 9th October 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand. The key elements of the Framework Agreement cover FTA in Goods, Services and Investment, and Areas of Economic Cooperation. The Framework Agreement also provides for an Early Harvest Scheme (EHS) under which common items have been agreed for elimination of tariffs on a fast track basis.

(c) to (e) The list of items on which tariff concessions will be exchanged between India and Thailand under the Early Harvest Scheme has been finalized after consultations with the administrative Ministries/Departments and the domestic stakeholders. The tariff preferences on imports to India would be available only for those products which enjoy the 'originating status' in Thailand as prescribed under the Rules of Origin which are integral part of any Free Trade Agreement. Similarly, the products which enjoy the 'originating status' in India would only get tariff preferences for imports in Thailand. To protect the vulnerable sections of the domestic industry, the Framework Agreement provides for each country to maintain a negative/ sensitive list of items on which no tariff concessions shall be granted under the FTA. In addition, the Agreement provides for trade defence measures which an importing country can take recourse to. In case of a surge in imports and injury to the domestic industry, a country is allowed to take measures such as anti-dumping and safeguards. The Agreement also provides for cooperation among customs authorities for ensuring that the Rules are not violated.

Special Economic Zones

316. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is not a single operational Special Economic Zone in the country, out of 21 notified SEZs;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps Government are taking to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) Eight Special Economic Zones (SEZs) at Kandla and Surat (Gujarat), Santa Cruz